

Leadership Remarks**Lisa Ramirez, EdD**

Director

USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

Dr. Lisa R. Ramirez recently served as the Chief Innovation Officer for Lubbock ISD. She relocated to Lubbock from Washington, DC where she served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. In this role, she oversaw a broad range of management, policy, and program functions.

Dr. Ramirez also served as the Director of the Office of Migrant Education and the Director for the Office of School Support and Rural Programs in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). Dr. Ramirez joined the U.S. Department of Education in 2006, when she was appointed Group Leader for the discretionary grants team, which plans and coordinates the High School Equivalency Program (HEP), College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and the then active Migrant Education Even Start (MEES) program. After only one and a half years in her new role, she was promoted to Director of the Office of Migrant Education, where she led the planning and coordination of all aspects of the various programs, including grant and contract administration, policy, evaluation, and special initiatives. In 2015, she added the Office of School Support and Rural Programs to her portfolio. Even with dwindling resources including a reduction in staff, Dr. Ramirez has continued to inspire the staff in such a way that they have developed their own leadership skills and have become motivated to produce consistently higher and more effective results, both inside the office and with the field of grantees.

The daughter of migrant workers and a former migrant worker herself, Dr. Ramirez left the fields to serve in the United States Army Reserves. She financed portions of her college education through the GI Bill and began her career as an educator in 1992, first as a middle and high school teacher in English and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Texas, then serving as Assistant Principal and Principal. In 2004, Dr. Ramirez took on the challenge of opening the Lubbock Independent School District's first charter campus, the Ramirez Charter School. Dr. Lisa R. Ramirez brings a unique combination of personal and professional experiences to help improve the academic success of students across the country. A dynamic, change agent at heart, Dr. Ramirez has had a powerful impact on the various staffs and offices where she has worked. Correspondingly, Dr. Ramirez was recognized within the Department for her unique positive spirit, notable intelligence and outstanding leadership.

Born in Chicago, but a Texan at heart, Dr. Ramirez received her B.A., M.Ed., and Ed.D. degrees from Texas Tech University, in Lubbock, Texas. A life-long learner, she is an alumna of the Executive Leadership program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the National Hispana Leadership Institute. She is also a Pahara-Aspen Institute Fellow. Dr. Ramirez enjoys running, hiking, writing and the study of film/world cinema. Dr. Ramirez currently lives with her husband, two children and two family dogs in Alexandria, Virginia.



Debora Hamernik, PhD

Deputy Director, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability (IFPS)
USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Deb joined NIFA in July 2020 as Director, Division of Animal Systems and was appointed Deputy Director, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability (IFPS) in November 2020. She provides leadership and oversight for competitive and capacity programs administered by IFPS staff. Prior to joining NIFA, she was Associate Vice Chancellor for Research; Associate Dean, Agricultural Research and Associate Director, Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Deb was National Program Leader at the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and Scientific Review Administrator in the NIH Center for Scientific Review. Deb earned a B.S. in Animal Science from UNL; a M.S. in Animal Science from Washington State University; and a Ph.D. in Animal Reproductive Physiology from Colorado State University. She was a postdoctoral fellow in Molecular Endocrinology at Case Western Reserve University.

Partnerships Panel



Crystal Kyle, PhD

Biological Science Specialist, Division of Family and Consumer Services
USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)

Dr. Crystal Kyle serves as a Biological Science Specialist in the Institute of Youth, Family, and Community (IYFC). She provides programmatic grant support to competitive and non-competitive grant programs. As a military veteran who farms, one of her emphases is on Military and Veteran Programs and scholarships, such as AgVet and Military Reimbursables. These include Military REACH, Military Family Learning Network, Virtual Lab School, Family Readiness, Yellow Ribbon, Substance Abuse, and Early Learning collaborations with Department of Defense. Other areas include Small and Medium Farm grants under Small Business Innovation Research, and provides assistance in Beginner Farmer and Rancher, AgrAbility, 4-H, and 1890s Programs.



Dave Llewellyn

Director of Farmer Training
Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming

Dave develops and leads Glynwood's farmer training efforts, including the farm's Apprentice Program and Hudson Valley Farm Business Incubator. He also plays a key role in connecting regional farmers to land access opportunities and has long served as an organizer of the Mid-Hudson Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (MH CRAFT).

Working closely with the farm team, Dave ensures Glynwood's farming efforts reflect the highest standards in resilient, sustainable practices and maintains Glynwood's position as a leader among national efforts to train beginning farmers. Dave oversees the process of testing innovative techniques and sharing information with regional farmers on the efficacy and outcomes of these initiatives.

Dave apprenticed at the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Drumlin Farm and managed organic vegetable gardens for Heifer International's Overlook Farm. Dave holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Susquehanna University and a Certificate in Nonprofit Management from Purchase College.



Michelle Hughes

Associate Director – Regional Food Systems
Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming

Michelle is the Associate Director of Regional Food Programs. She joined the team in late 2020, bringing to this role her passion for connecting diverse people with varied experiences and expertise to create a more just and resilient food system in the Hudson Valley.

Most recently, Michelle co-founded and was the Co-Director and Head Buyer for Rolling Grocer 19, a food justice project anchored by a full-line grocery store that prioritizes food insecure members of the community by offering fresh, high-quality, local and organic foods through a tiered Fair Pricing System. Previously, Michelle was the Director of Investments and Partnerships for the National Young Farmers Coalition, and for 10 years directed GrowNYC's New Farmer Development Project and FARMRoots programs, where she helped 20 immigrant families establish independent farm businesses on a combined 400 acres. She also taught Advanced Enterprise with Farm School NYC for four seasons.

Michelle holds a BS in Conservation Ecology and Agroecology from Rutgers University, and recently completed a course in clinical herbalism with 7Song at the Northeast School of Botanical Medicine. She lives with her husband and two dogs in Germantown, NY where they are stewarding 12 acres of unceded Mohican territory.



Megan Larmer

Senior Director - Regional Food Programs
Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming

Megan Larmer is Senior Director of Regional Food Programs. She leads projects that convene food and farming professionals to execute training, collective efforts, and creative projects that further the development of a regional food system in the Hudson Valley. Primary amongst these are Glynwood's Cider Project, the Hudson Valley CSA Coalition, and the Food Sovereignty Fund. Previously, Megan was Director of Strategic Initiatives and Community Outreach for Slow Food USA. She holds an MA with distinction in Anthropology from SOAS, University of London, where her research focused on seed exchange, first-generation women farmers and food heritage. Megan is currently a PhD researcher in anthropology at the University of Exeter's Center for Rural Policy Research investigating the social dynamics of the local food movement in the Hudson Valley. Megan has a broad range of experience in food and agriculture, including ten years as a restaurant professional, farmer's market manager, and community garden organizer.



Patrick Berquist
Director of Programs
Episcopal Charities of New York

Patrick joined Episcopal Charities in July of 2019 after working in the religious and non-profit world for over 15 years. His experience working with churches, teaching in the university classroom, mentoring youth, and serving various communities has prepared him well for this position. During the COVID 19 pandemic Patrick was tasked with finding new ways of supporting our programs, building a community of leaders, and finding new ways of meeting the overwhelming demands our programs faced. He received a Master of Arts from Northern Seminary in Chicago and a Bachelor of Arts from Anderson University in Anderson, Indiana. Patrick is currently pursuing a Master of Public Administration at The City College of New York.



Kenya Nicholas
Deputy Director
USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

Kenya Nicholas is the Deputy Director of the Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement within the U.S. Department of Agriculture headquartered in Washington, DC. She also manages two grant programs that assist socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers (Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (also known as the 2501 Program) and the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Policy Research Center). She works across all USDA agencies to coordinate outreach to USDA's stakeholder communities. She served in various positions across the Department for over 30 years. She attended Strayer University in Alexandria, Virginia. She is a Florida native with two children and her husband is a US Air Force veteran.



Jeffrey Mears, MPA
Executive Director
Wisconsin Tribal Conservation Advisory Committee

Jeff Mears started as the WTCAC Executive Director on June 15, 2020 and is an environmental professional with more than 25 years' experience in environmental, land, and natural resources program management. Jeff is a member of the Oneida Nation and most recently served as Deputy Director of Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) for the Oneida Nation.

Jeff has a Bachelor of Science degree in biological sciences with a minor in chemistry from Northern Illinois University, and a Master of Public Administration from UW- Oshkosh. He has worked with Tribal, State, and Federal governments and served on numerous committees such as the chair of the Oneida Land Commission, co-chair of the EPA Tribal Science Council, membership on the EPA Regional Tribal Operating Committee, and workgroup chair on the National Advisory Council on Environmental Policy and Technology.

Federal and Partner Presenters



Leslie Glover II

Program Manager, USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP)
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Leslie J. Glover II is the son of Dr. Leslie and Mattie Glover of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. His curiosity with earth science was sparked as a child through gardening and outdoor exploration with his parents and siblings. His mother was a biology professor and his father an agriculture professor at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, and both instilled a love of nature and learning.

Since 1992 Leslie has been employed with the United States Department of Agriculture and worked with the US Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). He graduated with honors from both Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University and Virginia Tech University in Environmental Sciences and has also completed additional academic coursework at Idaho University.

In his current role with the USDA, Leslie is the Program Manager for the newly formed Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP) in Washington, DC. The OUAIP was created as part of the 2018 Farm Bill to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and emerging agricultural practices. The coronavirus pandemic and social unrest of 2020 have brought issues like racial inequality, food deserts, food insecurity, persistent poverty, environmental justice, and food sovereignty to the forefront of the nation's consciousness. Leslie envisions OUAIP as a positive change agent to create lasting solutions in those arenas.

While working with the NRCS, he has held several positions including Assistant Program Manager, Senior Regional Soil Scientist, State Soil Scientist, Assistant State Soil Scientist, MLRA Project Leader, Soil Data Quality Specialist, and Field Mapper. The positions have afforded Leslie the opportunity to serve in places such as Arkansas, Arizona, Hawaii, Maine, Michigan, North Carolina, and Washington, DC.

Leslie is an advocate for personal leadership and purpose. He believes the seed for success starts with purpose and a vision to accomplish that purpose. Some of his professional accomplishments include co-authoring and completing soil surveys in Hawaii, Arkansas, and Arizona. He has also authored scientific papers with such titles as "Desorption Kinetics of Cadmium and Lead from Goethite: Influence of Time and Organic Acids" and "Historic and Future Perspectives of 1890 Universities and National Cooperative Soil Survey".

Since his youth, Leslie Glover II, has desired to be a positive voice for the careful stewardship and conservation of our earth and its resources, and to pursue the commandment given by God to be fruitful, multiply, replenish and manage those resources. He currently resides in Silver Spring, Maryland and is married to Dr. Melanie Glover. They have two beautiful daughters, Victoria, and Nadia.



Sean Patrick

Deputy Director, Risk Management Education
USDA Risk Management Agency

Sean Patrick currently serves as the Deputy Director for Risk Management Education at the Risk Management Agency (RMA) where his primary task is to oversee cooperative agreements nationwide with education providers including university extensions, nonprofits, and industry groups among

others. Mr. Patrick plans, develops, and manages significant aspects of the program including coordination with national and regional partners, program evaluation, outreach, and stakeholder engagement. Prior to this role, Mr. Patrick was the Chief of Public Affairs for RMA, leading event coordination, media relations, and digital communications. Mr. Patrick began his Federal career in 2001 and has served in various leadership roles and agencies, including the Department of Defense and the U.S. Census Bureau. Mr. Patrick is a proud father, U.S. Army veteran, and graduate of the University of Maryland. He lives near Annapolis, Maryland



Kristin Woods, PhD
Regional Extension Agent - Statewide
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Since 2003, Dr. Kristin Woods has served in Extension roles focused on community education and economic development in the area of food safety and food systems. Her primary area of emphasis has been taking a holistic approach to the development of farming and food businesses in Alabama. She specializes in helping small farmers co-manage conservation and food safety requirements while creating a financially sustainable business. Kristin is a Produce Safety Alliance Trainer-of Trainers and has taught Better Process Control School, Seafood HACCP, School (CNP) HACCP, Fruit and Vegetable HACCP, and ServSafe®. Prior to her Extension experience, Kristin spent five years in the food industry working in process development, quality, and management. She embraces a lifelong love of agriculture and currently owns and operates a small, diversified farm in Southwest Alabama.



JuliAnna Arnett
Local and Regional Food Systems Senior Agricultural Marketing Specialist
USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

JuliAnna serves as the Local and Regional Food Systems Senior Agricultural Marketing Specialist for the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Transportation and Marketing Program. In her role, she leads the USDA Local and Regional Food Systems (LRFS) Working Group and supports strategic interagency coordination and collaboration across the USDA around LRFS. JuliAnna previously worked as the Farm to School Lead for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Western Regional Office in San Francisco, California. She partnered with State agencies, school districts, producers, distributors and community organizations located throughout Alaska, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington to make farm to school the norm. Before FNS, JuliAnna developed triple bottom-line food guidelines for the country's fifth-largest county operation. As the former director of operations and food systems at Community Health Improvement Partners, she co-founded the San Diego County Farm to School Taskforce and Nutrition in Healthcare Leadership Team to support schools and hospitals in systematic advancement of local and healthful food procurement. She also served as a member of the California Food Policy Council, California Farm to School Network, and California Health Care Without Harm Healthy Food in Healthcare Team. Before moving to California from the Midwest, JuliAnna completed two terms as an AmeriCorps volunteer working across the U.S. When not at work, JuliAnna likes to explore national parks and the outdoors with friends and the nearest thrift shops for local treasures.

Meeting Coordinator**Alex Córdova, MPA**

Program Lead

USDA Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

Community Development Specialist

USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

Alex is the Program Lead for the USDA Center for Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, leading secretarial and departmental initiatives with a focus on public private partnerships, capacity building, and nutrition security. He also serves on the management team of the Local and Regional Food Systems Working Group, as well as the internal advisory committee of the USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP). Alex joined USDA in 2016 as a Presidential Management Fellow with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He also served as a Strategic Engagement Specialist and Promise Zone Desk Officer with USDA Rural Development. He holds a BA in Sociology, and in Religious Studies, with a minor in American Ethnic Studies, from Willamette University in Salem, OR. He obtained a Master's in Public Administration from the Cornell Institute for Public Affairs with a concentration in public and nonprofit management in 2015.